the claims, as amended, are fully allowable. Applicants therefore respectfully request the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: December 4, 2002

By: _____
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APPENDIX A

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE TO CLAIMS 4-5 AND 7-15

4. A method as claimed in claim 1 , [claim 2 or claim 3 and] wherein the alkaline earth metal carbonate comprises calcium carbonate.

5. A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims and] claim 1, wherein the particulate material has a surface area of from $3m^2.g^{-1}$ to about $13m^2.g^{-1}$.

7. A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims and] claim 1, wherein a rapid agitation or stirring motion is applied to the particulate material and the surface treatment agent [whilst] while the particulate material is in the treatment atmosphere.

8. A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims and] claim 1, wherein the treatment atmosphere is established in a vessel which is externally heated and in which the temperature of the treatment atmosphere may be externally adjusted and controlled.

9. A method as claimed in [any of the preceding claims and] claim 1, wherein the temperature of the treatment atmosphere is in the range of from 125°C to 150°C.

10. A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims and] claim 1, wherein the amount of the surface treatment agent present in the [said] atmosphere for treatment of the particulate material is in an amount of from about 0.5% to about 1.5% by weight of the particulate material and the particulate material immediately after

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leaving the treatment atmosphere contains about 0.4% by weight or less of unreacted surface treatment agent.

11. A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims and] claim 1, wherein the amount of surface treatment agent present in the treatment atmosphere is from about 0.8X to about 1.2X where X is the theoretical minimum weight of surface area of the particulate material.

12. A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims and] claim 1, wherein of the surface treatment agent deposited on the inorganic particulate material at least 80% by weight is chemisorbed, the remainder being unreacted or physisorbed.

13. A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims and] claim 1, wherein the amount of unreacted surface treatment agent is measured by thermogravimetric analysis.

14. A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims and] claim 1, wherein the particulate material has a surface area of about $4m^2.g^{-1}$ to about $6m^2.g^{-1}$, the surface treatment agent [comprises] comprising at least 60% by weight stearic acid and the amount of surface treatment agent present in the treatment atmosphere is from about 1.0% to about 1.2% by weight based on the weight of the particulate material.

15. A method as claimed in [any one of the preceding claims and] claim 1, wherein the particulate material has a surface area of from about $4m^2.g^{-1}$ to about $6m^2.g^{-1}$, the surface treatment agent comprises at least 85% by weight behenic acid and the amount

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of surface treatment agent present in the treatment atmosphere is in the range from about 1.0% to about 1.4% by weight based on the weight of the particulate material.

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